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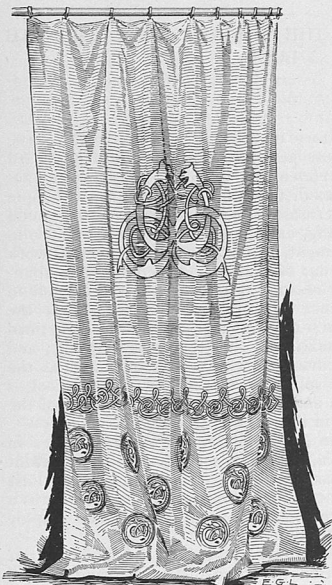
DECORATIVE TEXTILE FABRICS

IRISH EMBROIDERY.

BY THE EDITOR



FROM the island of Innisfail there has lately reached us certain products of industrial art that bear the stamp alike of art and of a new sentiment, that will certainly give them a place among the household appointments of the American people. We refer to the art embroideries, the art linens and the laces, with which are associated hand-spun, hand-woven and hand-dyed woollens for suitings and dress goods, not to speak of wood carvings, cabinet work and other products of native Irish industrial art. There is a sentiment about all these manufactures which does not belong to other products of Irish manufacture, say, for example, the power loom poplins of Dublin or the steam-woven linens of Belfast. The goods to which we now particularly refer are manufactured by the native peasantry in their cabin homes, in the wilds of Donegal and other remote parts of Ireland, and by people the majority of whom, some twelve years ago, had never seen any of the products they now manufacture. Here is a miracle that has sprung from the soil of the most savage and melancholy, and, we were indeed about to say, God-forsaken regions of poverty-stricken Ireland. Here is a case in which the desert has been made to blossom like the rose, and it will be well for us to inquire

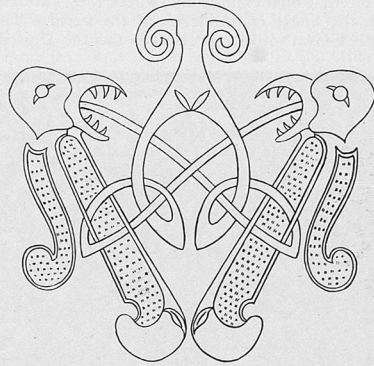


PORTIÈRE, DECORATED WITH APPLIQUÉ, IN THE CELTIC STYLE.

for a moment how the surprising result came about.

It was in the year 1883 that a whole-souled, high-hearted Englishwoman, a Mrs. Ernest Hart, was traveling through the wilds of western Donegal, the same district through which the writer has also traveled, which lies between the blue gulf of Loch Swilly on the north, and the frowning precipice of Sleive League on the south. Here, scattered over the barren moors and boglands, are the most wretched of human dwellings, huts more

miserable than English cowsheds, that shelter a large population of semi-starved humanity. Mrs. Hart was profoundly touched with the universal misery of the region, and determined to make a brave effort to find work for these people who had been denied both by man and nature of adequate means of subsistence. On her return to London she established what is known as the Donegal Industrial Fund, to which she herself liberally contributed, whose object was to revive and develop

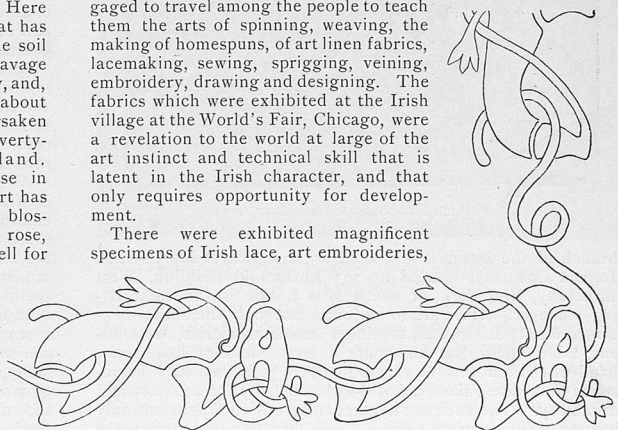


IRISH EMBROIDERY—CELTIC MOTIVE FROM THE BOOK OF KELLS.

cottage industry and handwork among the poor of County Donegal and elsewhere in Ireland.

Though the aim is philanthropic, the Donegal Industrial Fund is established on sound commercial lines, which alone give assurance of permanency and real success, and which has already brought comfort and prosperity to thousands of Irish homes. Competent teachers were engaged to travel among the people to teach them the arts of spinning, weaving, the making of homespuns, of art linen fabrics, lacemaking, sewing, sprigging, veining, embroidery, drawing and designing. The fabrics which were exhibited at the Irish village at the World's Fair, Chicago, were a revelation to the world at large of the art instinct and technical skill that is latent in the Irish character, and that only requires opportunity for development.

There were exhibited magnificent specimens of Irish lace, art embroideries,



IRISH EMBROIDERY—CELTIC MOTIVE FROM THE BOOK OF KELLS.

wrought of dyed and polished threads of flax, worked on hand-woven, softly-dyed Irish linen. Many of the patterns are reproductions of the illuminated Celtic arabesques that adorn the pages of the celebrated Book of Kells, and are known in consequence as Kells art embroideries. Celtic art is oftentimes very grotesque, representing imaginary animals with their tails or limbs interlaced in curious arabesques. The style is similar to the ancient Saxon art that dominated Europe prior to the dawn of Greek or Latin influence. These as well as designs of a more modern and therefore of a more popular character, are wrought in portieres, curtains, table cloths, and napkins, dresses, children's pinafores, etc., and since all of these articles clean perfectly, they are available for domestic use as well as for the artistic satisfaction of the eye.

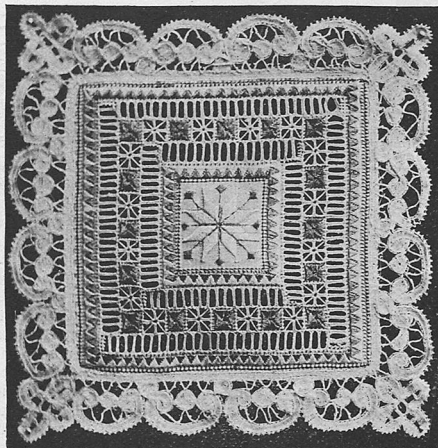
The above by no means exhaust the list of embroidered articles, for there were also exhibited Kells embroidered dresses, wrought in beautifully embroidered designs on polished linen, suitable for afternoon tea gowns, demi-toilettes, and for lawn and tennis parties, table centers, mantel hangings, sideboard covers, chair covers, cushion squares, etc., all executed in colored flax on flax, and hand-woven wool and other fabrics, embroidered in the form of curtains, wall panels and carriage rugs, were also exhibited. The great merit of these magnificent embroideries is indicated by the fact that they have obtained no less than thirteen gold medals and highest awards at various international expositions, where they have competed openly with the finest embroideries of the world. They only require to be known to be appreciated, and the United States



IRISH EMBROIDERED BEDSPREAD.

branch of the business is known as Mrs. Ernest Hart's Irish Import Company, located at 203 Rothschild Building, West Broadway, New York, of which Miss J. Ede is the enterprising manager. Here are to be found not only the above-mentioned dainty Irish laces, art linens and embroideries, dress linens, table linens, but also quite a large stock of hand-spun, hand-woven, undyed, or vegetable dyed, pure wool Irish home-spuns that have gained a world-wide celebrity for economy and durability. The natives of Donegal have been taught not only how to spin and weave these goods, but how to extract the beautiful and permanent dyes from the wild plants of the bogs,

so as to dye with accuracy a great number of tints, with the result that these Irish textile fabrics, whether suitings, woolen dress goods or art linen hangings, are productions of sterling merit, and as such deserve universal recognition. It is certain that a very large business will follow the establishment of the



TURKISH DOILY IN EMBROIDERY, DRAWN WORK AND LACE.

New York emporium for Irish art fabrics, and similar productions of American manufacture have powerful rivals in the new art products of the Celtic race.

EMBROIDERIES OF THE TURKISH COMPASSIONATE FUND.

BY MRS. S. A. BROCK PUTNAM.



THE history of embroidery runs back to the earliest period of human advance toward the refinements of life. As shown in accounts of the building of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, it was co-existent with wood carving, and doubtless, as easier of accomplishment, it predated the ornamental work in cedar of that period, and there is abundant reason to suppose that it existed in advance of painting. Very early in the world's development there were practiced the textile art and the art of dyeing; and the thread produced, weaving became a consequence, and the cloth at hand, with the splendid colors for which the East is still famous, it became a delightful pastime of the women of the Orient to express fancy in the work of the needle.

In Egypt, as well as in Persia, Syria, and other countries in interior and western Asia, the islands of the Eastern Levant and the Aegean, not to take into the account China, Japan, East India, and the dependent Pacific archipelago, embroidery is a resource among women even of the highest rank, who employ it in the most of their idle time.

As soon as the traveler touches the East he finds himself confronted with temptation to loosen his purse-strings in the embroideries found everywhere in the bazaars. At Alexandria, Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem, Larnaka on Cyprus, and Smyrna, embroideries of a fascinating character abound. It is not, indeed, until the back is turned upon the Orient that the spell of their charm loses its potency.

It is in Constantinople, however, Broussa, Salonica and the cities of the former dependencies of Turkey on the Balkan peninsula that embroideries prove the most irresistible. Close, really, must be the fist, and dull the eye to seductions of color, glow and glitter, that can turn away from the tempting heap shown by the merchant of Stamboul, and stroll away from the shadows of the Great Bazaar, without becoming the possessor of one or more pieces of embroidery. But interest of late years